



DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS 2

Based on the perceived need for supplementation, the consumer will be seeking a product to fill the need. While the manufacturer and the regulatory agencies must play major roles in ensuring the safety of dietary supplements available to the public, the consumer who makes the choice to purchase and use dietary supplements can also be proactive and take control of what he or she purchases to consume.

Consumers must be cautious about using any supplement, especially one that claims to treat, prevent or cure a serious disease. Consumers should ensure that they are sufficiently informed about a particular product before they purchase or use it. The consumer should seek information that is credible and from a reliable source such as a doctor, pharmacist, nutritionist or dietitian.

There are some basic questions every consumer should ask before taking supplements:

- Do I need supplements?
- Do I know that this supplement is safe?
- Does this supplement interact with any drug or food I am consuming?
- Do I know that this supplement works?
- Can I afford this supplement?
- Do I know enough about this supplement?

Table 1: Some Dietary Supplements Found to be Useful

Material/Product	Category	Beneficial Effects
Vitamin B ₁₂	Vitamin	Help produce red blood cells, prevent cognitive decline in older adults.
Calcium, Magnesium	Mineral	Help prevent osteoporosis
Fatty Acids/Fish Oils: EPA, DHA	Fatty Acids	Reduce the risk of Coronary Heart Disease.
Iodine	Mineral	Improve Thyroid function. To be used under the supervision of a knowledgeable practitioner.
Dandelion root	Botanical	causes bowel movements, <i>no scientific evidence available.</i>

The three tables present supplements (1) known to be useful (2) known to have adverse effects and (3) known to be neither because of insufficient evidence.

Table 1: Some Dietary Supplements Found to be Useful (cont'd)

Material/Product	Category	Beneficial Effects
Dandelion leaves	Botanical	Increases urination.
Beta Carotene	Anti-oxidant	<i>Scientific studies are still being done to support claims.</i>
Vitamin E		Prevents blood clotting.
Lycopene	Antioxidant	Reduce some cancer and heart disease.
CoenzymeQ10 (ubiquinone)		Essential for heart and blood pressure.
Vitamin C	Vitamin	Commonly known to prevent colds, BUT there is no scientific studies to support the claim.

Table 2: Some Dietary Supplements with Adverse Effects/Associated Illnesses

Material/Product	Category	Beneficial Effects
Aristolochic acid (Aristolochia, birthwort, snakeweed, wild ginger).	Herb	Potent human carcinogen; kidney failure, sometimes requiring transplant; deaths reported.
Chapparal	Herb	Abnormal liver function or damage; deaths reported.
Comfrey (<i>Symphytum officinale</i>)	Herb	Abnormal liver function or damage (cirrhosis); deaths reported.
Ephedra (Ephedra sinica), Ma huang	Herb	Nervousness, dizziness, alteration in blood pressure, gastrointestinal distress, stroke psychosis, and death.
Germander (<i>Teucrium genus</i>) wall germander, wild germander)	Herb	Abnormal liver function; hepatitis; deaths reported.
Niacin (Nicotinic Acid)	Vitamin	Gastro intestinal distress, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, pain, mild to severe liver damage.

Table 2: Some Dietary Supplements with Adverse Effects/Associated Illnesses (cont'd)

Material/Product	Category	Beneficial Effects
Kava (Piper methyysticum)	Herb	Abnormal liver function or damage; deaths reported.
L-Tryptophan	Amino Acid	Eosinophilic-Myalgia Syndrome (EMS) severe muscle pain.
Pennyroyal Oil (Hedeoma pulegioides)		Liver and kidney failure; nerve damage; convulsions.
St. John's Wort (Hypericum perforatum L.), Goat Weed]	Herb	Photosensitivity, dry mouth, constipation, dizziness, confusion, and mania; use with antidepressants may lead to increased side effects; deaths reported.
Vitamin A	Vitamin	Liver cirrhosis, bone and cartilage pathologies, birth defects in infants whose mother consumed large quantities of Vitamin A during pregnancy.
Yohimbe (<i>Pausinystalia yohimbe</i>)	Botanical	Altered blood pressure; heart arrhythmia; respiratory depression; heart attack; deaths reported.

Table 3: Some Dietary Supplements with Insufficient Evidence to Support Claims

Supplement	Category	Form	Effects/Claims
Omega-3 fatty Acids (EPA-DHA)		Liquids and Softgels	Anti-inflammatory, lower blood pressure, improve lipids and glucose in diabetes, improves rheumatoid arthritis and ulcerative colitis. <i>More research needed on the effects of fish oil on mental health.</i>
St. John's Wort (<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>)	Herb	Tablets and Capsules	Alleviates depression. <i>More studies needed.</i>
Garlic (<i>Allium sativum</i>)	Herb	Softgels, Tablets, Teas	Reduces cholesterol, blood pressure, microcirculatory effects. <i>Research has been inconclusive regarding its antibiotic and anti-fungal properties.</i>
Ginkgo Biloba	Herb	Tablets	Antioxidant, enhances memory. <i>More research needed to support the claim of improved memory.</i>

Table 3: Some Dietary Supplements with Insufficient Evidence to Support Claims (cont'd)

Supplement	Category	Form	Effects/Claims
Lecithin (<i>phosphotidylcholine</i>)	Mineral	Capsule, Powder and Granular	Improves memory (slow process of dementia), physical performance and muscle endurance. And weight loss. More research needed to prove its effect on dementia and weight loss.
Ginseng (<i>Panax quinquefolius</i>)	Herb	Variety	Known as "cure-all", aphrodisiac, energy booster, controls blood pressure among others. Research still inconclusive on some of the claims.
Sarsaparilla (<i>Smilax ornata</i>)	Roots/Herb	Capsule and Fluid Extracts	Sexual stimulant, diuretic, promotes good circulation, heals wound, gout, psoriasis and eczema. <i>Because of insufficient research it is difficult to separate fact from fiction.</i>
Glucosamine Sulphate	Amino-Sugar (Protein-Sugar)	Capsule, Tablets	Provides strength and elasticity to the joints relieve osteoarthritis pain. <i>More research needed to prove its effects on the structure of the joints.</i>

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